

REMARKS

Claims 1 – 8, 18 – 25, 28 and 31 – 43 are pending and rejected.

The applicants' attorney cancels claims 1, 2, 18 and 32 – 43, amends claims 3 – 8, 19 – 25, 28 and 31, and adds new claims 44 – 49. The applicants' attorney respectfully asserts that claims 3 – 8, 19 – 25, 28, 31 and 44 – 49, as amended, are in condition for allowance for at least the reasons discussed below.

If, after considering this response, the examiner believes the claims should not be allowed, the applicants' attorney respectfully requests that before issuing an Office Action, the examiner call Mr. John Janeway (425-455- 5575) to schedule a telephone conference to further the prosecution of the claims.

Claims 19 – 25, 28, 31 and 3 – 8

The applicants' attorney respectfully asserts that claim 19, as amended, is patentable over U.S. Patent 4,615,292 issued to Laukien (Laukien) for at least the following reason. Laukien fails to disclose a vessel including a mission module that, while coupled with one or more systems of the vessel, the module's equipment, supplies and resources enable the vessel to perform a specific mission, and while the mission module is not coupled with the vessel's one or more systems, the vessel is not enabled to perform the specific mission.

Laukien appears to disclose a watercraft (shown in FIGS. 1 – 3 but not referred to as a whole with a reference number) that includes two hulls 1 and 2 (FIGS. 1 – 4) and that can float on the surface of the sea, or dive and remain below the surface. When below the surface, the watercraft can be used to perform undersea work, such as repairing an offshore oil pipeline. When floating on the surface, the watercraft can be used to perform surface work, such as repairing an offshore oil rig. The watercraft can also be used in conjunction with a submersible craft 37 (FIG. 3) that is deployed from the watercraft to perform surface and undersea work that is similar to work that the watercraft can perform without the submersible craft 37. The submersible craft 37 does not provide the

watercraft specialized equipment, supplies and resources that enable the watercraft to perform a specific mission while the submersible craft 37 is coupled to the watercraft. Therefore, Laukien does not disclose a water vessel as recited in claim 19.

Claims 3 – 8, 20 – 25, 28 and 31, as amended, are patentable at least by virtue of their dependencies on claim 19 as amended.

Conclusion

The applicants' attorney respectfully requests the examiner withdraw the rejection against claims 3 – 8, 19 – 25, 28, 31, as amended, and issue an allowance for these claims and claims 44 – 49.

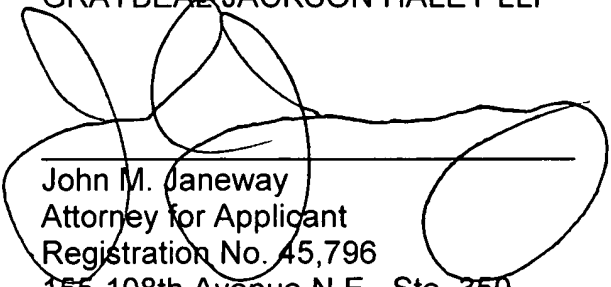
Should any additional fees be required, please charge them to Deposit Account No. 07-1897.

If, after considering this response, the examiner believes the claims should not be allowed, the applicants' attorney respectfully requests that before issuing an Office Action, the examiner call Mr. John Janeway (425-455- 5575) to schedule a telephone conference to further the prosecution of the claims.

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Respectfully submitted,

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